

Message Text

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PAGE 01 NEW DE 02641 251454Z

47

ACTION NEA-09

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O 251420Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7117

INFO USIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD IMMEDIATE

UNCLAS NEW DELHI 2641

BANGKOK FOR AMBASSADOR SAXBE

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR IN PK US

SUBJECT: US DECISION ON LIFTING ARMS EMBARGO

BEGIN SUMMARY: DOMINATED BY THE AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA AND SHIEKH ABDULLAH ON KASHMIR, THE INDIAN PRESS FEB. 25 GAVE LIMITED NEWS AND EDITORIAL COVERAGE TO THE US ANNOUNCEMENT ON LIFTING THE ARMS EMBARGO TO PAKISTAN AND INDIA. BANGKOK-BASED ITEMS REPORTED AMBASSADOR SAXBE TRIED "IN VAIN TO PERSUADE THE STATE DEPARTMENT AGAINST RESUMPTION OF ARMS SUPPLY TO PAKISTAN. END SUMMARY.

1. PRESS TRUST OF INDIA, ASSOCIATED PRESS, UNITED PRESS INTERNATIONAL, AND REUTERS ACCOUNTS OF THE WASHINGTON ANNOUNCEMENT WERE CARRIED IN GENERALLY BRIEF NON-PROMINENTLY PLACED FRONTPAGE ITEMS. ONLY THE CONGRESS PARTY-ORIENTED NATIONAL HERALD AND THE COMMUNIST DAILY PATRIOT ACCORDED THE STORY THE SECOND LEAD NEWS SPOT. A TYPICAL HEADLINE: "US LIFTS ARMS BAN" (NATIONAL HERALD).

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 NEW DE 02641 251454Z

2. MOST NEWS DISPATCHED QUOTED THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE ATHERTON SAYING THE US IS NOT INTERESTED IN "RESUMING OUR PRE-1965 ROLE AS A MAJOR ARMS SUPPLIER TO THE REGION." REPORTAGE ALSO CITED ATHERTON'S STATEMENT ON SUPPLYING ARMS ON A CASE-BY-CASE AND FOR CASH ONLY BASIS; BRINGING THE AMERICAN POLICY IN LINE WITH THAT FOLLOWED BY OTHER MAJOR WESTERN ARMS SUPPLIERS; THE US INTENTION "NOT TO STIMULATE AN ARMS RACE," AND THE HOPE THAT "WE WILL DO ALL WE CAN TO ENCOURAGE...CONTINUED RECONCILIATION " BETWEEN INDIA AND PAKISTAN.

3. OTHER RELATED NEWS TREATMENT INCLUDED DISPATCHES FROM SOME CORRESPONDENTS TERMING THE ANNOUNCEMENT AS "A MAJOR SETBACK" FOR INDO-US RELATIONS; BRIEF SPECULATIVE STORIES WHETHER FOREIGN MINISTER CHAVAN WILL VISIT THE US IN MID-MARCH, AND LINKING THE SOVIET DEFENSE MINISTER GRECHKO'S VISIT WITH A DISCUSSION ON THE US DECISION TO SUPPLY ARMS TO PINDI.

4. IN A LEAD EDITORIAL, "KEEPING COOL," THE STATESMAN COMMENTED THAT THE WASHINGTON DECISION HAS "THE MERIT OF ENABLING NEW DELHI TO DECIDE PRECISELY WHERE IT STANDS," AND ADDED: "INDO-US RELATIONS SHOULD BE ALL THE BETTER FOR THE REALIZATION IN THIS COUNTRY THAT THERE WAS NEVER ANY POSSIBILITY OF A BAN IN PERPETUITY; AND THAT THE US COMMITMENT WENT NO FURTHER THAN A REJECTION OF THE 'THEORY OF A BALANCE OF POWER' BETWEEN INDIA AND PAKISTAN." IT CONCLUDED: "MUCH OF THE INCOHERENCE IN US POLICY CAN BE TRACED TO AN INCLINATION BY AMERICAN AMBASSADORS TO IDENTIFY WITH THE COUNTRIES TO WHICH THEY ARE ACCREDITED. HOWEVER, THAT IS DR. KISSINGER'S PROBLEM. NEW DELHI ON ITS PART HAS SOMETHING TO GAIN BY KEEPING COOL."

5. THE HINDUSTAN TIMES EDIT-PAGED A COMMENTARY, "US ARMS AID TO PAKISTAN," WRITTEN BY MAJ. GEN. D.K. PALIT (RETIRED). HE MAINTAINED THAT "THE FURORE THAT HAS BEEN CREATED IN PARLIAMENT AND THE PRESS APPEARS AN OVER-REACTION." HE STRESSED: "MILITARILY SPEAKING, THERE IS NO IMMEDIATE APPREHENSION IN INDIA THAT THE SCALE OF THE ARMS AID

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 NEW DE 02641 251454Z

ENVISAGED BY MR. FORD IS LIKELY TO GIVE PAKISTAN A DEFINITE MILITARY SUPERIORITY ON OUR WESTERN FRONTIER: BUT THAT IS NOT THE POINT. WHAT IS RELEVANT IS WHAT WILL THIS NEW US COMMITMENT ENCOURAGE MR. BHUTTO TO DO? HE HAS SERIOUS PROBLEMS FACING HIM VIS-A-VIS AFGHANISTAN: AND THE RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN KASHMIR OFFER HIM A TEMPTING OPTION FOR AN ADVENTURIST POLICY AGAINST INDIA. THIS IS NOT THE TIME FOR THE UNITED STATES TO PITCH IN WITH AN

ARMS AID PROGRAM THAT MIGHT BE CONSTRUED BY MR. BHUTTO AS A
GO-AHEAD SIGNAL-- AS HIS PREDECESSORS DID, SO CONSISTENTLY."

6. PRESS COVERAGE NOTED AMBASSADOR SAXBE'S STATEMENT IN
BANGKOK THAT HE HAS MADE "CLEAR" HIS VIEWS BUT HE WASN'T
"PERSUASIVE" AND HE WILL SUPPORT THE PRESIDENT'S DECISION--
"IT'S THE PRESIDENT'S DECISION TO GO AHEAD, AND IT'S AN
AMBASSADOR'S JOB TO SUPPORT HIS POSITION." FRONT-PAGING
THE REUTERS' STORY WITH HEADLINE, "FOUGHT, AND GAVE UP",
THE NATIONAL HERALD CARRIED MR. SAXBE'S PHOTOGRAPH.
THE HINDUSTAN TIMES RAN A SINGLE-COLUMN CARTOON ON PAGE ONE
WHICH SHOWED A THAI GUIDE TELLING THE AMBASSADOR: ".....NOTHING
LEFT BUT RUINS.. ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, MR. SAXBE?"SCHNEIDER

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